

Recognizing Vina as an Underground Railroad Station Host



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Greetings:

I am writing this letter to promote recognition of the work of a nineteenth century enslaved woman named Vina who participated in the Underground Railroad as a station host. My hope is to ignite widespread acknowledgement of her work and see her station included in relevant registries and databases, including the [National Park Service's Network to Freedom Listings](#).

Recently, I was exploring research data stored on an Ohio State University (OSU) Criminal Justice Research Center (CJRC) website, and I noticed an entry involving Vina. She was killed on October 17, 1853 by the man who had enslaved her.

The research data includes witness testimony about Vina's "ungovernable" behavior:

"... once found that this woman was harboring a negro"

"Harboring," as you know, was one way of helping freedom seekers make their way through the Underground Railroad, which was active in her time and place.

From a National Park Service website: "The Underground Railroad refers to the effort--sometimes spontaneous, sometimes highly organized--to assist persons held in bondage in North America to escape from slavery." Source: <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/>

I searched information accessible online, but so far have not found mention of her beyond the research from OSU. Seemingly, her heroic and courageous actions have not been recognized.

Thank you to the person at OSU who compiled the data, and thank you to OSU for making the data accessible to the public.

I would like to know more about Vina, and hopefully she will become the focus of academic and journalistic research. On October 17, 2023, 170 years will have passed since Vina's death. I am honored to share information about Vina before another year passes.

I believe the following statements to be true about Vina:

- She was approximately age 48 or 49 at the time of her death.
- The location where she harbored freedom seekers was in or near the town of Dennisville, Virginia and within four miles south or nine miles southeast of the Amelia County Courthouse.
- She knew no one had a right to claim ownership of herself or anyone else.
- She would not want to use her killer's surname as her own last name.

My sources include the OSU date file describing witness testimony, 1850 federal census, the 1850 federal "slave schedule," an 1860-ish map of Amelia County, and additional resources, [which I have linked in a folder on my Google Drive](#).

The OSU data file is linked below. “Homicides of Adults in Amelia County, Virginia”

The Ohio State University (OSU) Criminal Justice Research Center (CJRC). (2016, December 16). *Homicides of Adults in Amelia County, Virginia*. Historical Violence Database. https://cjrc.osu.edu/sites/cjrc.osu.edu/files/amelia_county_homicides.doc

Property details indicate the file was created 10 September 2004 and updated on 2 August 2009. I accessed the file 1 October 2023.

Readers are likely to find some of the file content upsetting. The content includes descriptions of extreme violence.

Please feel welcome to share this letter with those interested in Underground Railroad research and encourage anyone interested in Vina’s story to pursue additional information.

Sincerely,

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